

LITTER TASK FORCE
Draft
Minutes of the November 17, 2005 Meeting
Director's Conference Room
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI

Tom Getz (RIDEM) convened the meeting at 3:00 PM. Also present were Robin Erickson (representing John Trevor of RIRRC), Greg Gerritt (ECRI), Jenny Perreira (Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council), Terri Bisson (RIDEM), and John "Jef" Fornaro (Earth Day Rhode Island). Mr. Fornaro served as recorder.

Minutes of the October meeting were discussed. It was noted that the use of cloth shopping bags was discussed along with plastic bag recycling. Terri noted that there was in fact no discussion of considering a "bottle bill" concerning aluminum cans and that such a program could upset recycling revenues. The minutes were unanimously amended accordingly and approved as amended. It was again noted that, while bottle bills do reduce trash, there is currently no market for recycled glass. It was reported that some 25% of municipal recycling pickups is glass, which is now being used as cover at the landfill.

A handout from Ms. Anita SanAntonio from the RI Food Dealers Association was distributed that provided. She was not able to attend the meeting but provided the following update. In the second month of operation of the plastic grocery bag collection program a 42-foot trailer was filled with baled bags. The number of bags being collected is increasing and the response from consumers was great. Robin then also reported on the plastic bag-recycling program. The project is going well. Stores representing 90% of market share now offer the program, including many smaller and independent stores. 60% of people who shop in these stores are participating. RIRRC has been behind the program, doing PR on the program to encourage people to tie their plastic bags in knots before disposing of them, conducting surveys, doing follow-up, and conducting a media blitz when the first bales were produced and when the first trailer load was sent to TREX, the company which uses the bags in its decking products. Jef again commented that it is a good idea to publicize the end uses of recycled materials so that consumers can see the benefits of their recycling efforts. Robin was asked if she could contact RIRRC to see if they wanted to develop a story about the first trailer being loaded with recycled plastic bags.

There was a discussion concerning an email sent by Barry Schiller, who was unable to attend the meeting. Barry reported that Rep. Greg Schadone has agreed to pre-file legislation to restore to RIDEM some of the litter tax, which is being collected but is now going into the general fund. Barry will submit proposed wording of the laws to be amended and requested suggestions. Barry reported that he is still working on Senate support. He also mentioned the Sierra Club's suggestion to mandate refunds for shoppers who use bring cloth bags to the market, a suggestion that received less than unanimous support from the Litter Task Force (LTF).

Tom mentioned that he had talked to Liz Stone about a legislative update on bills to be backed by RIDEM in the forthcoming session. It was agreed that a letter from the LTF would be helpful. Barry, Jef and Tom will get together to prepare a draft for presentation at the next meeting. Organizations such as ECRI, Earth Day RI and the Sierra Club are encouraged to send in their own letters of support.

The problem of trash and tangled fishing line at fishing sites was taken up. There was an Eagle Scout project that dealt with tangled fishing line. Tom mentioned he would contact Chris Dudley to discuss this at a future meeting. There is lots of trash at fishing sites, and tangled line is a hazard to all sorts of wildlife. DEM will continue its program to provide trash containers at fishing sites and is working with NOAA and CleantheBay.org to mount coastal cleanups to remove marine debris, including large items, with the possible exception of those that have become habitats for marine life. .

Rep. Peter Lewiss had previously introduced legislation to ban smoking at beaches in order to reduce or eliminate the litter produced by this activity. LTF is willing to get behind this idea, and Jef will contact Rep. Lewiss to offer our support.

Used tires continue to be a disposal problem and many of them are winding up in waterways and elsewhere. Tipping fees are charged, but little if any of this money is used to address the problem. Used tires collected by dealers are now going to the incinerator at Sterling, Connecticut. Previously, such a disposal method was outlawed in RI, but the legislation has been changed. There is a market for used tires; this was the subject of a Discovery Channel report describing the business of tire recycling and reuse. Jef reported his experiences with an attempt to develop such a business in RI years ago and the regulatory resistance he encountered. Terri stated her opinion that such a proposal would be much better received today. Jenny agreed to look into what other states are doing and report her findings.

The question of recycling at the Richmond Welcome Center on I 95 was again brought up. Such a program could be expanded to other sites, such as the new I 295 facility being constructed in Lincoln. Promoting recycling at sites like these provides excellent opportunities to set a good example for citizens and visitors alike. Because of time constraints and the absence of some members, this will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Scheduled meetings of the LTF often conflict with Roundtable meetings, so it was considered that future meetings should be moved to the third Wednesday of the month. There was general consensus on this, but that would make the next meeting on December 21. Because this date was thought to fall too close to the December Holiday period, it was agreed that the next meeting would take place on December 14 at 3:00 in a conference room to be announced, and a regular schedule of meetings on the third Wednesday would begin in January.

Thanksgiving wishes were exchanged, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:20.

Respectfully submitted,

Jef Fornaro